

St Swithun's CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122789
Local Authority	Nottinghamshire
Inspection number	359302
Inspection dates	1–2 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Sue Hall

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	140
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Canon Tony Walker
Headteacher	Christina Mallender
Date of previous school inspection	22 January 2008
School address	Grove Street Retford DN22 6LD
Telephone number	01777 702043
Fax number	01777 705280
Email address	office@st-swithuns.notts.sch.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
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M2 7LA

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors, who observed seven teachers in a total of 12 lessons or parts of lessons. The headteacher joined the lead inspector for several lesson observations. Meetings were held with the school's leaders, members of the governing body and pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of policies, planning, records, minutes of governing body meetings and data about pupils' performance. They examined documentation associated with the school's arrangements for keeping pupils safe. Inspectors scrutinised 50 completed questionnaires returned by parents and carers, 54 by pupils and 19 by staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas:

- How well do boys and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve, especially in writing?
- To what extent has attendance improved?
- How well do staff use the full range of assessment information to ensure that lesson activities are interesting and challenge all groups of pupils?
- How effective and rigorous are staff in monitoring the work of the school, judging the quality of provision and identifying further areas for improvement?

Information about the school

The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school and is situated in the small town of Retford in Nottinghamshire. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is twice the national average. A small number of pupils are in public care. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average, although in some years there is a much higher proportion than in others. These additional needs are mainly specific learning difficulties. A very small number of pupils speak English as an additional language.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

This is a school that provides a satisfactory quality of education. Most pupils say they like attending St Swithun's and many parents and carers are satisfied with their children's experience at this school. There are strengths in the pastoral care of the pupils that ensure those who may be vulnerable are well supported. The quality of education for the youngest children is good and ensures they get off to an effective start to their education. The personal development and well-being of the pupils is satisfactory and their spiritual, moral and social development is good. There is a clear emphasis on pupils working together and enjoying special moments together.

From a low starting point, children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and enter Year 1 with skills levels that are close to the expectations for their age. Their communication skills are less well-developed than other areas of learning. Pupils in Years 1 to 6 make satisfactory overall progress and attainment at the end of Year 6 is broadly average. Standards are improving after they had fallen significantly in 2010 when the pupils in Year 6 did not make the progress anticipated and standards in English were very low. Since then, the school has thoroughly reviewed many of its practices and there has been improvement in the curriculum. With newly introduced topics, the cross-curricular activities are raising the pupils' levels of interest and motivating more of them to try harder with their work. Nevertheless, standards and progress in speaking and writing are the weakest aspect of pupils' work. Sometimes, staff miss opportunities for pupils to discuss their ideas and to produce more lengthy and detailed pieces of writing.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, while ranging from examples of outstanding practice to that which is inadequate. Throughout the school, staff have good relationships with the pupils and praise their efforts well. While assessment procedures are improving, the use of such information is quite variable. This results in the planning of some activities not offering a consistently high level of challenge to some groups. The marking of pupils' work does not always identify well enough what they still need to do to improve.

The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. The senior leadership team is a 'close-knit' group. While this has many advantages, it has made it difficult for senior staff to stand back and evaluate rigorously the quality of education provided. This has led to generous school self-evaluation that takes insufficient account of recent data. The governing body is supportive of the school, but several are recently appointed and the group is at an early stage in developing its role in holding the school to account. Links with parents and carers are satisfactory, but several note their dissatisfaction with some aspects of the school's work. Nevertheless, with a tighter focus on developing more detailed assessment procedures, improvements in the curriculum and new staff shadowing

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subject leader roles that they will take up in the near future, the school has the capacity to improve further.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of pupils' speaking and writing skills by:
 - providing more planned opportunities for pupils to discuss their ideas and improve their vocabulary
 - providing more opportunities for all pupils to write at greater length and with more detail.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - making sure that activities are carefully planned by using assessment information to provide an appropriately high level of challenge for all
 - ensuring that the marking of pupils' work identifies what else they can improve.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that the monitoring of the work of the school is more rigorously evaluative and accurately identifies the quality of provision and the further areas for improvement
 - extending the involvement of the governing body in the work of the school to enable it to hold leaders to account for what is achieved
 - improving links with parents and carers so that they feel more informed and involved in supporting their children.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

While most pupils settle well to school and have positive attitudes to learning, they have limited skills in communicating with others. Data from 2009 and especially the 2010 national tests in Year 6 showed a significant decline in the proportion of pupils achieving either the expected level or the higher levels in their work, especially in English.

Assessment information shows that more than half of this group had special educational needs and/or disabilities. Many of the pupils did not reach their individual targets and did not make enough progress in Key Stage 2. The school recognises that the programme of academic support for individual pupils was too late to make a significant impact on their learning.

The current rate of progress, however, is considerably better. As pupils move through the school they make satisfactory progress, although this is not entirely consistent. There is little difference in the achievement of boys and girls. The very small number of pupils speaking English as an additional language and those in public care make similar rates of progress to their classmates, as do those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff organise activities that help pupils improve their reading skills, including the use of adult volunteers and specific programmes of support. During this year, there has been a largely successful focus on providing more opportunities for pupils to 'speak to

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write', although occasionally staff still miss opportunities for pupils to discuss their ideas. The school has also focused on providing more time for pupils to develop the skills of producing extended pieces of writing, but again the opportunities to do so are mixed. In mathematics, progress is better than in English, as was seen in a very successful lesson in Year 6 when pupils had to find the cost of decorating a room by working out how much paint, wallpaper and carpet was needed from the size of the room and the cost of materials. Such activities help pupils develop the skills to equip them for their future.

Pupils' spiritual development benefits from close links with local churches and regular visits from clergy, including those who are good at talking to younger pupils. There are good opportunities for personal reflection and 'tingle' moments when the whole school enjoys singing together. Pupils have a satisfactory understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe, although some have concerns about the behaviour of a very small minority of others. Pupils' behaviour is satisfactory. They are often quiet and compliant in lessons, but such behaviour does not always promote good learning as many pupils make limited efforts to answer questions or improve their work. The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles is satisfactory. Staff help pupils to develop an understanding of the benefits of physical activity and factors relating to obesity. The school provides nutritious lunches and has organised activities that focus on the benefits of healthy packed lunches, but with very limited success. Pupils have satisfactory opportunities to contribute to the school and wider community including fund-raising and the work of the choir but such opportunities are not extensive. There has been a slight improvement in attendance, with the number of persistent absentees falling.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	3
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching and learning is variable; it is good for the youngest and older pupils and satisfactory overall, although there is occasionally some inadequate teaching. The teaching is most effective when staff plan practical activities where pupils have to work things out for themselves or when pupils take part in lively discussions, as they did in a good lesson in Year 5 during the inspection. Where the teaching is less effective, the planning of activities is weak and does not identify specifically what pupils are to learn. For example, on occasion, pupils have no choice over what materials to use and simply copy what an adult demonstrates, resulting in limited learning. While staff mark pupils' work conscientiously, there is often limited indication of what they need to improve. The curriculum for English and mathematics is satisfactory. The school has worked with success to improve cross-curricular topics but, in some lessons, staff do not put enough emphasis on improving writing, spelling and the presentation of work.

The care, guidance and support for pupils are good and are especially effective for potentially vulnerable children. The school works closely with a range of external agencies to meet the particular needs of families and enable those pupils who are in danger of exclusion to be integrated into school. The school has given priority to providing the support of a counsellor to work with individual children and giving them time to talk about issues that concern them. A parent support advisor works with families on a variety of issues including attendance and behavioural concerns. Provision for pupils in public care is

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effective and enables them to settle and start to grow in confidence. Provision for pupils in the breakfast club is satisfactory, but the interaction of the staff present with pupils is limited and there is no comfortable seating for those who would like to talk.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

School leaders and managers share a strong commitment to helping pupils improve their life-chances including through a focus on improving standards. Staff work successfully to support all pupils in pastoral matters and to help them grow in self-confidence. The teaching team work closely together and support each other, especially in developing an enriched curriculum. The senior leadership team are confident and articulate leaders, but have not always made best use of the full range of information to evaluate how effective the school is. The school's current self-evaluation indicates that most aspects are good, which does not match data or inspection findings. This is in part because the monitoring of planning, teaching and learning is often supportive rather than rigorously evaluative. The governing body is supportive of the school, but some staff note in the inspection questionnaire that they know few governors because their programme of focused visits is limited.

Safeguarding procedures are effective. There are very careful checks of everyone who works with the pupils. The school site is well maintained and provides a safe and attractive environment for learning. Staff are rightly monitoring the concerns caused by traffic parked inappropriately outside school. The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning is satisfactory and in pastoral matters it is good. There are some links with other schools, although a relatively limited number of visits to successful settings to learn from them. Links with parents and carers are broadly satisfactory, but senior staff have not always been successful in developing warm and mutually beneficial contacts with several parents and carers. The school promotes equality of opportunity in a satisfactory manner, but has not always prioritised the needs of more-able pupils. The school promotes community cohesion in a satisfactory manner through links with several local groups and organisations and a plan to develop wider and global links to promote pupils' cultural awareness.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with knowledge and skills levels that are well below the expectations for their age. Children often have very limited experiences beyond their home and their speaking skills are well below those expected for their age. In the Nursery and Reception groups, they make good, and sometimes outstanding, progress. This is because staff are enthusiastic and supportive, yet challenging. They provide a high-quality learning environment that encourages children to find things out for themselves. There is a good mix of adult-led and child-chosen activities and children have lots of opportunities to make choices in what they do and what resources they can use. The current focus on traditional tales encourages children to learn more about different stories and their characters. The use of Hansel and Gretel as a theme for activities includes reading, mark-making, counting, baking, sensory activities to smell ginger and other spices, and craft activities alongside role-play opportunities. Staff focus well on children's speaking skills although, at times, the questions they ask result in one-word answers and adults miss the opportunity to follow this up and encourage a more descriptive vocabulary. Teaching, learning, leadership and management are all good. The indoor areas are well resourced and attractive, but some areas outdoors are not quite so stimulating.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

A good proportion of parents and carers responded to the inspection questionnaire. Most of the responses indicated that parents and carers think their children like school and that they are kept safe. They believe also that teaching is good and their children are prepared well for the future. Unusually, while there were several negative comments made on the questionnaire responses, there were none making positive comments or noting the strengths in provision. The main areas of concern are that several parents and carers do not think the school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour and does not take account of their suggestions and concerns. The inspectors believe behaviour is satisfactory and that the school does much to emphasise what is right or wrong. There were also some strongly felt opinions about other areas that parents and carers do not feel the school's leaders handle well. The inspection notes that the school provides a satisfactory range of information to parents and carers. However, staff have not been successful in developing warm relationships with some parents and carers and the school's self-evaluation focuses on their lack of support rather than on what the school is doing to improve this.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Swithun's CofE Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 50 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 140 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	25	50	23	46	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	28	56	22	44	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	21	42	27	54	2	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	17	34	31	62	1	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	25	50	25	50	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	19	38	29	58	2	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	21	42	24	48	4	8	1	2
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	21	42	27	54	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	22	44	27	54	1	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	20	40	19	38	9	18	2	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	18	36	22	44	6	12	2	4
The school is led and managed effectively	16	32	31	62	1	2	2	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	21	42	27	54	2	4	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



3 February 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Swithun's CofE Primary School, Retford, DN22 6LD

Thank you very much for making the inspectors welcome when we visited your school recently. We gained a lot of information from talking to some of you including the school council and others at lunchtime and in lessons. I particularly enjoyed seeing how the youngest children in the Early Years Foundation Stage improved their counting skills in lots of different activities linked to the story of Hansel and Gretel. Thank you also for the questionnaires that you filled in for the inspection.

Your school is providing you with a satisfactory quality of education, which ensures that you make satisfactory progress in your learning. The extra help and support available for those of you who find learning a bit hard and the way the school helps you to work through your problems are valuable. The school is also successful in ensuring that you are kept safe.

The headteacher, governing body and staff have agreed to work on three main areas to improve the school. These are to:

- help you all make more progress in developing your speaking skills and to improve your writing
- ensure that all staff use information about the progress you are making to provide work that is just a little bit harder for most of you and improve the marking of your work to help you understand what to improve
- ensure that the school leaders check a bit more carefully what has to be improved and work more closely with your parents.

You can also help by making sure that you try a bit harder to join in discussions. Also, could you encourage your parents and carers to help you make healthy choices in your packed lunches?

Yours sincerely

Sue Hall

Lead inspector

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